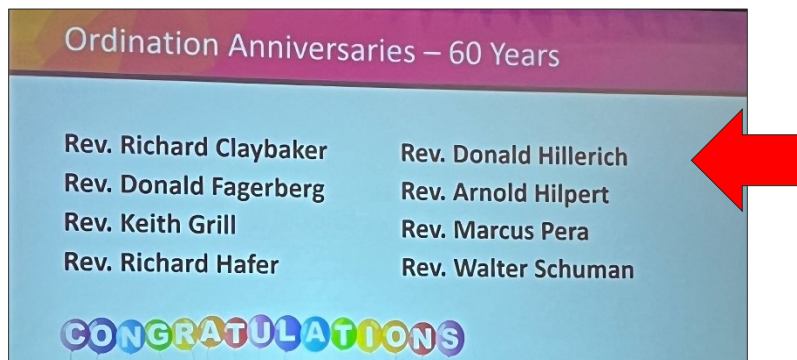


Greetings St. Paul Lutheran Church!

It was a great time at the Synod Assembly in Orlando (No I didn't get to any of the Disney Theme Parks, but I did get to Disney Springs for several hours).

You'll hear more about the Assembly from our voting members Marty Hillerich and Gail Seyfarth at worship on Sunday but there was one part I wanted to make sure those who read the PastorBlast get to learn about. Pr. Don Hillerich, our very own Pastor Emeritus, is celebrating his 60th ordination anniversary! Just for context, I'm celebrating 17. As the Bishop said, "When I grow up, I want to be like Pr. Don." I agree.



Last year the focus at Assembly was all of the "Re" words that St. Paul was also looking at as I went into my Sabbatical. I found this year's Assembly very fitting for St. Paul too. The

theme was based on Acts 16 with the question, "Who comes up in your dreams?" It's the story of Paul's dream of a man calling him to Macedonia. When Paul got there, he didn't find a man but rather a woman named Lydia. This Biblical story has many insights including the call to not just invite people to church but to talk with people and get invitations extended to us, just as Lydia invited Paul to stay with her. This is very much what we are focusing on this year at St. Paul as we look to engage with the Arlington Park neighborhood.

Our keynote speaker was Rev. Dr. Rafael Malpica Padilla, former Bishop of the Caribbean Synod (youngest pastor to ever serve as bishop at 30 years old) and current professor at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (one of the seven ELCA seminaries). He was amazing. He received standing ovations after each keynote address. There is no way for me to share all of his thoughts. Suffice it to say, we left inspired. But I do need to share one of his famous one-liners. "Does the church of Jesus Christ have a mission? No, the mission of Jesus Christ has a church." The church isn't the focus but rather what Jesus does and we as the church get to help fulfill Jesus' mission. I love that distinction.

We have two new Office of the Bishop staff. Pr. Derek Hoven is the new Assistant to the Bishop/Director of Evangelical Mission for the north. Pr. Carlos Hamm is the new Assistant to the Bishop/Director of Evangelical Mission for the south (that's us). Here is a picture of Bishop Suarez (the one in the hat – aka Mitre) and Deacon Aura Suarez (holding the binder) installing Prs. Derek (back) and Carlos (front).

Take care and God bless,
-Pr Ashley

